Down the Rabbit Hole: A Commentary About Research on Parents and Special Education

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Abstract

This article examines what we know about the experience of parents in the special education system—in particular, parents of children with learning disabilities since the passage of PL-94-142. Toward this end, I offer a review of special education literature about parent and professional collaboration, a rationale for relying upon a plurality of methodological frameworks in conducting research with parents of children with LD, and a challenge to the profession to raise and respond to ethical questions about our naturalized practices in alliance with parents.

Keywords

parents, special education, learnng disability research, disability studies in education

> Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?
>
> —Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

There is no more significant date in the history of American special education than November 29, 1975. With the stroke of a pen, President Gerald Ford enacted P.L. 94-142—the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (1975)—thereby granting a different future for children with disabilities and their families in this country. P.L 94-142 (known today as The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, or IDEIA) marked the end of an egregious era in which the guarantee of public education was denied to generations of students with disabilities.

As is well established in the annals of special education, the origins of this revolutionary law grew out of a series of "right to education" lawsuits initiated in the early 1970s by parents of children with disabilities across the country. Building on the momentum of the civil rights movement, parents and their advocates pressed the courts for equal protection under the law. The collective grassroots efforts of this advocacy community eventually led to the appeal to Congress for federal legislation to guarantee the right to "a free and appropriate education" for students with disabilities and the right to due process for their parents (Itkonen, 2007; Kingdon, 1995; Melnick, 1995; Scotch, 2001; Silverstein, 2000; Turnbull & Turnbull, 1987). And the rest, as they say, is history. And what a tangled history it is.

In this commentary about research on the experience parents (in particular, mothers of children labeled learning disabled [LD]) have with the special education system , I raise the following points for consideration: (a) researcher subjectivity as a legitimate standpoint, (b) the identification and meaning of the archetypal "reluctant hero narrative" within stories mothers tell about special education, (c) implications of the reluctant hero narrative for research about mothers of children labeled LD, and (d) the case for expanding our range of methodological frameworks.

The View From Somewhere

> If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there. (Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*)

Like the majority of authors featured in this special issue, I ground my research within the academic discipline of disability studies in education (DSE)—a discipline that has been described at length elsewhere in this special issue. As

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a DSE scholar, I share the belief that research objectivity and neutrality is a fundamentally elusive goal because "all researchers (like all people) view the world from someplace in it" (Baglieri, Valle, Connor, & Gallagher, in press)—a place necessarily constructed by a researcher's particular values, culture, and life experiences (Nagel, 1986; Putnam, 1981). Rather than attempting "scientific" objectivity as a researcher, I, like my DSE colleagues, choose instead to reflect mindfully on my inherent subjectivity and make transparent its influence on my work. Peshkin (1988) referred to this process as cultivating a *well-informed subjectivity*—a process that seeks "not to eliminate, but to document the effects of the personas that influence our behavior as researchers" (Harry, 1996, p. 295). I acknowledge that my interest in and commitment to parents of children with disabilities has everything to do with the subjectivities that I claim—in particular, my long-time working relationship with parents of children with LD (especially mothers) and the narrative research with mothers that I have chosen to do. Thus, my subjectivities necessarily influence the content of this commentary.

My engagement with parents began in 1978 (the year by when states were required to have fully implemented P.L. 94-142), when I began my career as a middle school resource teacher. I immediately recognized that the parents of my students could not fully embrace their right to be educational partners until they possessed working knowledge of the new law. With the help of a few interested mothers, a fellow resource teacher and I developed and offered what was to become an ongoing series of workshops with our parents—a 6-year program that fostered genuine and reciprocal relationships between home and school.

My ongoing interest in parents intensified while I was later working at a developmental pediatrics center as the educational diagnostician/consultant on an interdisciplinary evaluation team. I accompanied countless parents—primarily mothers—to meetings at every grade level in both public and private schools over a 10-year period. I certainly attended meetings in which the outcome was satisfactory to both professionals and parents; however, more often than not, I observed presumably well-intentioned professionals engaging in coercive persuasion rather than genuine collaboration. Moreover, it seemed that mothers, by virtue of *being* mothers, routinely became constructed by professionals as (a) too subjective to contribute meaningfully and (b) in need of expert guidance—(an observation substantiated by research referenced later within this commentary). Based on these experiences, I later devoted my doctoral work to better understanding the implementation of the law within public schools and the processes by which parents become positioned within that context. The result of that study is a book, *What Mothers Say About Special Education: From the 1960s to the Present* (Valle, 2009), a four-decade collective narrative based on the told experiences of 15 mothers of children labeled as learning disabled—a data source to which I will refer within this commentary. Lastly, I come to this work as the mother of a son with severe disabilities who lived only a short time after birth. His life, albeit brief, profoundly influenced my way of being in the world and, in particular, my way of "knowing" other mothers of children with disabilities.

Taken together, I contend that the sum of my subjectivities contributes to, rather than detracts from, my stance as a researcher. My contextual framework informs both the questions I ask and the meaning I make of what I study. Given that the majority of special education research to date is grounded within the positivist tradition, I acknowledge that my orientation falls outside of the predominant paradigm that assumes the necessity—and possibility—of researcher objectivity (Kauffman & Sasso, 2006; Sasso, 2001). What follows is a case for embracing plurality within our research methodologies.

Mother as Alice in Wonderland: An Allegory

Narrative structures, such as myths, fairy tales, legends, and stories, exist in all human cultures (Bettleheim, 1976; Bruner, 1990; Campbell, 1949). As Egan (1991) explained, "We are a storying animal; we make sense of things commonly in story forms; ours is a largely story-shaped world" (pp. 96–97). Narrative is perhaps the primary framework through which humans have always constructed meaning (Polkinghorne, 1988). It is for these reasons, then, that I rely on narrative inquiry to investigate what parents of children with learning disabilities have to tell *us* about special education rather than studying what I might think I need to know about *them*.

To date, I have focused my research on mothers. My decision to do so is based upon the following observations: (a) Mothers engage more frequently with school personnel than either fathers or sets of parents, (b) mothers are more likely to be perceived by school personnel as "too subjective" by virtue of their gender, and (c) parenting a child with a disability inevitably becomes entwined with expectations for "the ideal mother"—an imposed cultural identity that fathers do not share (Valle, 2009).

Over the last three decades I have listened to countless stories about how mothers "make sense" of their experiences with special education. What strikes me most is not the narrative particularity of these stories but, rather, their uncanny similarity. The commonality across stories suggests the presence of issues extending beyond a specific child, parent, teacher, administrator, psychologist, school, or district. While it is my intent neither to imply that every mother's experience with special education is the same nor to generalize that all mothers have challenges in exercising parental rights under the law, what *is* inarguable is

the presence of such stories at all and their persistence over time.

It is worth noting that the stories that mothers often tell about themselves (in both formal and informal contexts) bear striking resemblance to the heroic archetype of the "reluctant hero" described in Campbell's (1949) seminal work of comparative mythology, *The Hero With a Thousand Faces.* In his extensive study of cross-cultural mythology, Campbell repeatedly found the character of "the reluctant hero"—an ordinary person thrust into extraordinary circumstances who, after a period of doubt about his or her capacity to move beyond the status quo, rises to acts of fearlessness (Segal, 2000).

For the purpose of illustration, I will rely on a collective narrative told by 15 mothers of children with learning disabilities who represent diverse generations, races, classes, and cultures (Valle, 2009). Within these stories, it is worth noting that every mother likens her experience to embarking on a journey not of her choosing. Each describes a process of disorientation as she gradually gains her bearings in an unfamiliar place, followed by a turning point along the journey in which she regains clarity and autonomy. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* the much-beloved children's classic written by Lewis Carroll (1865), provides us with an example through which to consider this story arc identified within mother narratives. The following is a brief synopsis of Carroll's tale.

> While sitting idly on a riverbank with her sister, Alice sees a White Rabbit, clad in a topcoat and clutching a pocket watch, scurry past and down a rabbit hole. Curious girl that she is, Alice follows the rabbit down the hole and falls a very long way down into a hallway with locked doors of all sizes. She finds a key to a door, but the door is too small for her to go through. She drinks the contents of a bottle labeled DRINK ME, which causes her shrink to a size too small to reach the key. Then, she eats a cake labeled EAT ME and grows so tall that she hits her head on the ceiling and begins to cry—her tears flooding the hallway. Having shrunk in size again, Alice swims through what is now a river of her tears and meets a swimming Mouse along the way. The river becomes crowded with other animals and birds. Alice and the others climb onto the riverbank to decide how they might get dry again. A Dodo suggests a Caucus-Race in which everyone runs in a circle with no clear winner. Later, Alice goes inside a house and begins to grow again. The animals gawk and throw pebbles at her that turn into little cakes that, when eaten, reduce Alice back to size. She continues on her way and meets a Caterpillar smoking a hookah. Alice talks to him about her persisting identity crisis before coming upon a "mad" tea party. She joins the guests, who bombard her with riddles. Growing weary of their company, Alice leaves what she says is the stupidest tea party that she has ever been to and subsequently enters a garden. There she meets three living playing cards and, soon, a King and Queen. The Queen is a difficult person who dismisses those who displease her with her trademark phrase: "Off with his head!" Later, Alice attends the trial of the Knave of Hearts, who is accused of stealing the Queen's tarts. During the proceedings, Alice grows large again and is accused of taking up too much air. As a witness in the trial, Alice displeases the King and Queen, and they order her to leave. She refuses and argues with them over the ridiculous proceedings. The Queen shouts, "Off with her head!"—but Alice fearlessly calls them just a pack of cards. The ordeal ends when Alice's sister wakes her from a dream.

Lewis Carroll enjoys an enduring popularity, and references to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* are readily recognizable within American popular culture. For example, "down the rabbit hole" has come to signify a bizarre or difficult state or situation where things do not make sense. Not unlike Alice, who falls down a rabbit hole into an Other World populated by peculiar characters whose logic defies her own, these mothers describe their entry into and journey through special education in much the same way—and in a sense, Alice's adventures curiously mirror their own storylines.

Within this narrative collection—as well as within countless other stories told to me over the years—mothers of children with LD begin their stories at the moment that they notice something different about their children. For most, this intuition occurs during infancy or early childhood; however, they typically report that professionals dismiss such nascent concerns. Given that learning disabilities are largely a "school-age disorder," these mothers, unlike mothers whose children's disabilities are identifiable at birth, describe confusion about the difficulties that later emerge for their children. The pursuit of an explanation leads curious mothers to fall "down the rabbit hole" where they, too, attempt to unlock multiple doors. The pain incurred from unsuccessful attempts to understand and help their children (most often the result of seeking out multiple professionals who offer differing opinions) corresponds with Alice's swim through her own river of tears. "A race in which everyone runs in a circle with no clear winner" becomes an apt metaphor for what mothers describe as their thwarted efforts to change the outcome of schooling for their children. Not unlike the identity crisis that Alice experiences within a world that makes no sense to her, mothers likewise report how they struggle with motherhood that does not conform to "the cultural script" (not the least of which is the seeming inability to "protect" their children), thereby leaving them with intense feelings of guilt, shame, and failure.

We might liken Alice's coming upon the "mad" tea party to the point along this journey at which mothers intersect with special education. Upon invitation to the special education committee meeting, the mother joins others at the table, who bombard her with what seems like an unending series of "incomprehensible riddles"— the sometimes incomprehensible jargon of assessment, eligibility, and special education services. Common to all of the mother narratives is a well-defined *turning point* (most often a particular incident) after which mothers begin to regain clarity and autonomy within this Other World—much like Alice does after she finally tires of the tea party guests and leaves what she names "the stupidest tea party" she has ever attended. It is of interest that Alice later becomes a witness in the Knave of Heart's trial in that mothers depict interactions with professionals as something akin to being on trial. They describe professional rebuffs to their new-found autonomy in much the same way that Alice—who begins to grow again during the trial—is accused of "taking up too much air" at the proceedings. And not unlike the Queen's response to Alice's resistance ("Off with her head!"), mothers report professional resistance to, and/or dismissal of, their claims of knowledge and rightful insistence upon their place at the table. Alice's ordeal ends, of course, when she is awakened from her dream; these mothers, on the other hand, awaken to greater clarity only to continue the journey—a journey most often described as *the* defining aspect of their motherhood and the most significant influence on their adult lives.

What We Know About Where We Have Been and Where We Are

> "It's a poor sort of memory that only works backwards," says the White Queen to Alice. (Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*)

What implications, if any, might the archetypal reluctant hero narrative hold for research about parents and special education? To consider that question, it is necessary to revisit where we have been and where we are in regard to the existing literature. Given that special education law (IDEIA, 1990, 1997, 2004) grants legal rights to parents of children with disabilities not afforded to parents of children without disabilities, special education can be thought of as an anomaly within the tradition of parent and professional relationships within public education (Skrtic, 1995). Thus, this legally mandated parent–professional collaboration immediately was of interest to researchers, who began documenting the phenomenon shortly after the law's implementation. Although space prohibits a comprehensive review of the literature on parents and special education (spanning more than 30 years), what follows is a reflection on the kind of research that emerged. It should be noted that some of the research cited is not limited to parents of only children with LD; however, I contend that the experiences of parents of children with disabilities other than LD (specifically in regard to parent–professional collaboration) parallel those documented by parents of children with LD.

What We Know About Where We Have Been

Documentation of parent and professional collaboration first appears in the literature shortly after implementation of the law. As early as the late 1970s, evidence emerged that parents lacked knowledge about their rights under the law as well as an accurate understanding of team decisions about their children's education (Hoff, Fenton, Yoshida, & Kaufman, 1978). Observations of parent–professional conferences confirmed unclear explanations of psychological testing, a lack of opportunity for parents to ask questions, and the presentation of pre-prepared Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) for parents to sign (Goldstein, Strickland, Turnbull, & Curry, 1980). In fact, early surveys indicated that school professionals (a) perceived the parent role within IEP meetings to be that of a passive recipient of information rather than an active contributor (Yoshida, Fenton, Kaufman, & Maxwell, 1978), (b) acknowledged holding team meetings for the purpose of discussing eligibility and placement prior to meeting with parents, and (c) completed IEPs mostly without parental input—despite the law's requirement for parent and professional collaboration (Poland, Thurlow, Ysseldyke, & Mirkin, 1982).

In light of the passive positioning of parents within special education meetings, it is rather unsurprising that professionals began to label parents who exercised their right to challenge in negative terms (Lipsky, 1985; Sonnenschein, 1981). For example, Sonnenschein observed professionals who operated out of a belief system in which

> parents who disagree with a diagnosis or seek a second opinion are "denying"; those who refuse the kind of treatment that is suggested are "resistant"; and those who are convinced that something is wrong with their child despite inconclusive tests are "anxious." (p. 64)

Well into the 1980s, researchers continued to observe and document IEP meetings in which special education professionals dominated "air time" and actively positioned parents in passive roles (Vacc et al., 1985; Vaughn, Bos, Harrell, & Lasky, 1988). More than a decade after implementation of the law, the literature is rife with evidence that parent and professional collaboration consistently falls short of the spirit of the law. In the early 1990s, a survey of more than 100 parents of children with learning disabilities revealed that "over half of the parents indicated that they were initially confused" about their child's diagnosis and described the test results and recommendations as "not

helpful" (Malekoff, Johnson, & Klappersack,1991, p. 420). Moreover, the testimonies of more than 400 parents/family members of children with disabilities heard by the National Council on Disability (1995) confirmed the persisting and widespread practice of presenting parents with pre-prepared IEPs—a practice that parents described as making them feel "largely left out of the process" (p. 11). Furthermore, researchers documented that the use of technical language and educational jargon in special education committee meetings functioned in such a way as to exclude parent input (Goldstein, 1993), leaving parents uncomfortable about admitting to professionals what they did not know about special education (Simpson, 1996) as well as feeling "disenfranchised and alienated from educational systems designed to help their children" (Kroth & Edge, 1997, p. 14).

What We Know About Where We Are

Into the third decade since the passage of the law, researchers widely acknowledge the persisting chasm between professionals and parents and continue offering suggestions for enhancing collaboration. For example, we find such recommendations for professionals as inviting parents to become involved in school-wide activities, choosing mutually agreeable conference times, engaging in ongoing contact with parents, and receiving professional training in communication and team building (Garriott, Wandry, & Snyder, 2000). Dabowski (2004) makes such suggestions as examining the professional "team culture" within a school, arranging seating to connote a sense of equity among members, and providing parents with information about location of the meeting, time parameters, and parking information. Other recommendations include making information about special education law and procedures available, allowing sufficient time for meetings, using less professional jargon, and co-writing IEP goals with parents (Fish, 2008). Specific tools and strategies for working with parents are described within the literature, such as PATH (Parent Activities Toward a Healthy Self-Determination), a self-assessment tool developed by Abernathy and Bingham (2009) for parents to evaluate themselves in regard to coping, knowledge, and advocacy. McNaughton and Vostal (2010) suggested a mnemonic active-listening strategy for professionals working with parents:"LAFF *don't* CRY," where L = Listen, empathize, and communicate respect; A = Ask questions and ask permission to take notes; F = Focus on the issues; F = Find a first step; and *don't* C = Criticize people who are not present, R = React hastily and promise something you cannot deliver, and Y = Yakety-yak-yak. Darch, Miao, and Shippen's (2004) "practical model for including parents" recommended that professionals (a) help parents improve parenting techniques, (b) encourage parents to communicate about their children, (c) suggest options for volunteering in the classroom, (d) provide technical assistance on effective teaching at home, and (e) suggest ways parents can be involved in school-wide activities.

What Mothers Tell and What Researchers Tell About Them

If we compare the research about parents and their experiences with the special education system (primarily gathered through methods such as surveys and observations) to the kind of archetypal narratives that mothers seem to *choose* to tell, what implications, if any, are there for research? Does the knowledge gained from traditional research methodology appear to differ in any significant way from the knowledge gained through methods of narrative inquiry?

There appear to be points of connection as well as departure. Both methods corroborate ongoing professional dominance, use of exclusionary expert language, devaluation of parent knowledge, and passive positioning of parents within special education committee meetings. Yet, the majority of special education literature differs from mother narratives on two significant points: (a) the treatment of both parents and professionals as monolithic groups and (b) a singular focus on integrating parents into the current system—leaving unexamined the efficacy of the system itself and its material consequences in the lives of parents, particularly mothers.

It is of particular significance that the contributions of race, class, culture, and gender to parent and professional interaction receive scant attention in the literature reviewed above. Such factors are most often identified within demographic information (but not used for data analysis) and/or mentioned with a cursory nod to "cultural sensitivity" within parent–professional interactions. (The possible influence of the race, class, culture, and/or gender of professionals upon collaboration with parents likewise is not addressed.) Thus, the implication is that special education committee meetings take place within objective, ahistorical contexts where everyone checks their values, beliefs, and assumptions at the door. American public schools have always been—and continue to be—highly politicized places (Apple, 1992; Brantlinger, 2003; Kliebard, 1995; Spring, 2002). Whether or not the *spirit* of a law is carried out has everything to do with the attitudes and beliefs of those who implement the law (Valle & Connor, 2010). There seems to be an implicit assumption within the literature reviewed that all parents, regardless of background, share the same understanding and response to disability as do American public schools. In contrast, the 15 mothers referenced earlier (Valle, 2009) readily identify ways in which they perceive race, class, culture, and gender to influence their interactions with professionals—a finding worth examining further.

Although the "how-to" strategies offered within the literature reflect commonsense approaches for professionals, these kinds of recommendations imply that issues can be resolved if professionals commit to "playing nice" with parents. More troubling is persisting literature that constructs

parents as somehow "needing to be fixed" —a long-standing perception held by professionals throughout the history of public schools, particularly in regard to those parents who are not English speaking, White, or middle class (Cutler, 2000; Valle, 2009). This point is well illustrated within Darch et al.'s (2004) "practical model," which assumes all parents need professional help with parenting techniques (according to whose evaluation and value system?), communicating about their children (as if they have not done so before and with no acknowledgment of how well communication may have been received in the past), learning about the options available for them to volunteer at school (as if all parents are available to do so or value volunteering), teaching their children at home (as if parents have not been teaching their children since the day they were born), and learning how to become involved in school-wide activities (as if "not knowing how" is the reason for parents not being involved). Moreover, a one-way transmission of knowledge is assumed within this model that effectively dismisses the value of parent knowledge and any chance for the collaboration that the authors propose will occur.

Beyond the Looking Glass

> "I can't explain myself, I'm afraid, sir," said Alice, "because I'm not myself you see." (Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*)

It appears, then, that the research on parents and special education focuses largely on how well schools include parents within established special education processes and procedures. Researchers study parents as subjects because their inclusion (or not) speaks to the degree and quality of school compliance as mandated by federal law. For this reason, parents are considered worthy material for special education research. In other words, such research might be considered more akin to program evaluation (i.e., how well parents perform their role as outlined and guaranteed under the law) than research that seeks to understand the lived experiences of parents—experiences that are necessarily tied to race, class, and gender. This is not to imply that there is no value in program evaluation but, rather, to acknowledge what is often left unexamined—namely, the school context within which parents interact with professionals, as well as the larger cultural context within which the meaning of disability is constructed.

Different Questions, Different Conclusions

When we extend our range of research methodology on parents' experiences with special education to include such frameworks as critical theory and DSE, we necessarily frame different questions and arrive at different conclusions. Although the application of critical theory and a DSE framework to the study of parents and special education is not a new phenomenon, it is comparatively new in relationship to more traditional special education literature. For example, in the mid-1990s, Linda Ware, a noted DSE scholar, moved the conversation away from *how well* parents and professionals collaborate to *why* the inherent power structures and hierarchical authority inherent in traditional bureaucratic organization of schools pose significant contextual barriers to parent and professional collaboration. By posing questions about the context of schools rather than the collaborative competency of parents, Ware "named" the folly of continually refining protocols and procedures to more effectively include parents when the truth of the matter is that collaboration requires "an organization wherein most, if not all, of the trappings of the traditional bureaucratic organization are recognized as dysfunctional" (Ware, 1994, p. 352). It is worth noting that Ware's assessment of schools closely resembles the "down the rabbit hole" experience that mothers describe.

Likewise, since the 1990s, Beth Harry and colleagues have established an extraordinary line of ethnographic research that not only acknowledges how the cultural diversity of families matters greatly within special education (Harry, 1992; Harry, 2008; Harry, Allen, & McLaughlin, 1995; Harry, Klingner, & Hart, 2005; Kalyanpur & Harry, 1997) but also clarifies the cultural values and assumptions that constitute special education as a culture itself (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999). Moreover, Kalyanpur, Harry, and Skrtic (2000) move beyond documentation of the problems that exist between parents and professionals to explain how the equity and advocacy expectations for parents under the law contradict "the hierarchy of professional status and knowledge on which the positivist paradigm of professionalism is based and are also in conflict with the values held by many families from culturally diverse backgrounds" (p. 119). Other researchers are posing and examining new questions about the role of class in parent and professional collaboration (Hale, 2010; Org-Dean, 2009).

This promise of this kind of research extends far beyond documenting how well parents and professionals collaborate and recommendations for "allowing" parents a more equitable place at the table. It requires that we think hard about the complex contexts within which we work. I believe that our best and most reliable sources of information about special education are mothers (more likely to negotiate with schools than fathers) who, in the advocacy role thrust upon them by law, intimately experience the particular way that American public schools have chosen to respond to disability. If we ask mothers to tell their stories, we learn about the consequences of our practices within their lives. They have much to teach us about the impact of disability on their identities as mothers and about the profound experience of parenting a child with a learning disability. And it is within those archetypal narratives of "the reluctant hero" that we find points of resistance that tell us what is *not* working within our system of practice.

I argue that context and subjectivities not only matter but matter a lot. When we shift our research lens to a paradigm consistent with critical theory and DSE, our questions shift considerably, as does our knowledge. For example, what might we learn by asking different questions about parents and special education research, such as, What is the meaning of knowledge within this context? Whose knowledge counts most, and why? Who defines normalcy, and why? Who benefits most from the way in which normalcy is defined? Who "belongs" within this context, and who does not (and never has)? How does power circulate within this context, and what are its effects? How does this context reflect (or not) the context of families, and in what ways might this matter? Who benefits from our *chosen* institutional response to disability, and why? What material consequences does this particular response to disability have in the lives of parents and families? What do parents have to say about those consequences? How might those consequences influence parent engagement? How does the context of public schooling reflect the larger social, political, and historical issues of the cultural context in which both parents and professionals live and work? If we are committed to fulfilling the spirit of the law, such are the hard questions that we must ask of ourselves and our profession.

How we choose to respond to disability within schools has everything to do with the material consequences for parents and their children with disabilities. In light of the persisting issues between parents and professionals over the last 30 years, it is time we critically reflect on our naturalized responses to disability and consider structural changes. Embracing a plurality of methodological frameworks can only move us closer to asking ourselves the hard questions and moving toward a different future with parents and families of children with disabilities.

> Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance? (Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*)

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